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ART. X.—CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. — *The Myths of the New World: A Treatise on the Symbolism and Mythology of the Red Race of America.* By DANIEL G. BRINTON, A. M., M. D. New York : Leypoldt and Holt. 1868. 8vo. pp. 307.

THOUGH we are not of the number of those who think that Americans — a people wholly of European ancestry and European civilization — are under a subtle sort of obligation to study the antiquities and primitive history of the continent they inhabit, rather than of the continent from which all their culture is originally derived, we are nevertheless glad to see American archæology treated by an American scholar in a scholarlike way. We know of no reason, except the slight esteem in which all subjects not fraught with so-called “practical” implications have been habitually held by our people, why these studies should be left, as for the most part they have been left, to the curiosity and industry of scholarly Frenchmen and Germans. The talk which is currently made about “American literature,” “American traditions,” “indigenous science,” is indeed much of it affectation, much of it folly. Though our future may be as closely wrapped up with that of Asiatic China, and virtually Asiatic Russia, as Mr. Banks in his amusing speech would have us believe, yet our past is in Europe, and the less we try to cut loose from it, the better. It is Athenian speculation, Roman imperialism, mediæval Catholicism, feudalism, chivalry, the Protestant Reformation, English constitutionalism, which have made us what we are; and we are no more indebted to the red Indians than the modern French are to the yellow Turanians, who once in all probability inhabited their vine-clad country. Nevertheless, geographical position must be allowed to influence our sympathies to some extent; and we are right in thinking that we have at least as much interest in knowing the pre-historic antiquities of our country as any German philologist can possibly have. Our situation, too, is all in our favor; we are as conveniently placed for studying the American Indians as we are inconveniently placed for studying ancient Iberians or mediæval Normans. Throughout large portions of our country, relics of the race which formerly dwelt in it are continually showing themselves. The ancient mound covered with wild vines, and the rude arrow-head turned up by the farmer’s ploughshare, have their history. And though the annals of the race which we have supplanted — chaotic and meaningless, revealing no progress from century to century — would perhaps hardly repay the trouble of recovery, were it possible to recover them, yet

their customs and beliefs, their social organization, and the myths in which they perpetuated their crude interpretations of the phenomena of Nature, will be found extremely valuable as throwing light upon the primitive history of the human mind.

Dr. Brinton is probably the first American who has specially treated the subject of Indian mythology in a thorough and scholarly way. We say nothing of Mr. Parkman, whose admirable chapters on Indian manners and customs deal only incidentally with mythology. Mr. Schoolcraft's superficiality and extravagance are now, we believe, quite generally admitted. And Mr. Squier's learned book on the "Serpent Symbol" is justly objected to by our author, as written entirely in the interest of one school of mythology, and that a rather shallow, or at least a very incomplete one. Sun-worship, combined with the phallic adoration of the generative power in Nature, will by no means explain everything; and it is one of Dr. Brinton's most noticeable merits, that he refrains from striving to reduce all the phenomena of mythology within the compass of any single favorite formula.

But if Mr. Squier's treatise falls short of the mark, that of the Abbé de Bourbourg goes wholly astray. Of all the hypotheses which have been employed in the study of mythology, that of Euhemerus is certainly the most stupid and the most unprofitable. It cuts away all the supernatural, or, to speak more accurately, the extraordinary, features of the myth, wherein alone dwells its peculiar significance, and to the dull and useless residuum accords the dignity of primeval history. In this way we lose our myth without compensation. We ask for bread, and get stones. Considered merely as a pretty story, the legend of the golden fruit watched by the dragon in the garden of the Hesperides is not without its value. But what merit can there be in the statement that Herakles broke a close with force and arms, and carried off a crop of oranges which had been guarded by mastiffs? May we not legitimately feel indignant at the childish ingenuity which can be satisfied only by the degradation of the grand Doric hero to a level with any vulgar fruit-stealer?

It is perhaps unnecessary, however, to rail at a theory, of which, were it not for M. de Bourbourg, we might say that it has long since been utterly abandoned by all philologists and scholars. In the Euhemeristic hypothesis there has long been generally recognized that aspect of rawness which belongs to most of the doctrines originated or eagerly patronized in the eighteenth century. We now know far better than it was then known what constitutes genuine historic tradition, and we no longer regard the vast body of mythologic lore as a remnant of primitive history. Gradually it has become apparent to us

that the marvellous portion of these old stories is no illegitimate ex-crescence, but was rather the pith and centre of the whole in days when there was no supernatural, because it had not yet been discovered that there was such a thing as Nature. The myths of antiquity are its primitive philosophy; they are the earliest recorded utterances of men concerning the visible phenomena of the world into which they were born. They embody the wit and wisdom which fetichism had to offer as the result of its meditations upon life and the universe.

It is in this philosophical spirit that Dr. Brinton has studied the myths of the New World. He begins, as Mackay does in his great work on Greek and Semitic mythology, by inquiring into the idea of God. "The idea of God," says our author, "is, according to the realists, the sum of those intelligent activities which the individual, reasoning from the analogy of his own actions, imagines to be behind and to bring about natural phenomena." Nothing could be more admirable than this definition, which supplies the key to the whole philosophy of fetichism. The first men had no theology; they possessed no symbolic conception of God as an infinite unity; they were astray amid an endless multitude of unexplained and apparently un-connected phenomena, and could therefore form no generalized or abstract notions of divinity. But, as our author forcibly puts it, they were "oppressed with a *sensus numinis*, a feeling that invisible, powerful agencies were at work around them, who, as they willed, could help or hurt them." They naturally took it for granted that all kinds of activity must resemble the one kind with which they were directly acquainted,—their own volition. Seeing activity, life, and motion everywhere, it was impossible to avoid the inference that intelligent volition must also be everywhere. So ingrained is this disposition to interpret Nature from data furnished by our own consciousness, that, even after centuries of philosophizing, we can hardly refrain from imagining an effort, or *nisus*, as constituting the necessary link between cause and effect. Yet in our minds, so far as doctrines are concerned, fetichism has been very nearly destroyed by the long contemplation of the unvarying uniformity of Nature. In the mind of the savage and of primitive man there were, of course, no such checks. The crude inference had its own way unopposed; and every action had its volition behind it. There was a volition for sunrise, and another for sunset; and for the flood and storm there was a mighty conflict of volitions, a genuine battle of *manitous* or superior entities, whenever the great, black, shaggy ram, lifting audaciously his moist fleece against the sky, was slain and annihilated by the golden, poison-tipped, unerring shafts of Bellerophon.

Here, then, as the Veda shows us, is the correct interpretation of ancient mythology. Here is the frame of mind which led to the construction of innumerable myths, and to the existence of which during many ages the very language in which the myths were conceived and recorded bears witness. Not that mythology is the result of a "disease of language," as Max Müller rather absurdly puts it. Mythology has governed speech far more than it has been governed by it. The dawn, the thunder-clouds, the earthquake, were called by proper names because they were believed to have a kind of vast personality; and in this there was nothing abnormal. The sensuous, personifying tendency of primitive speech is not the cause, but the product, of the myth-making frame of mind, of the inevitable disposition to regard all outward phenomena as personal.

The record of the mythopœic epoch, in Greece and other countries inhabited by portions of the Aryan race, is wonderfully rich and various. We need not expect to find in the mythology of the New World the wealth of wit and imagination which has so long delighted us in the stories of Herakles, Perseus, Hermes, Sigurd, and Indra. The mythic lore of the American Indians is comparatively scanty and prosaic, as befits the product of a lower grade of culture and a more meagre intellect. Not only are the personages less characteristically portrayed, but there is a continual tendency to extravagance, the sure index of an inferior imagination.

Nevertheless, after making due allowance for differences in the artistic method of treatment, there is between the mythologies of the Old and the New World a fundamental resemblance. We come upon solar myths, myths of the storm, and myths of the dawn, curiously blended with culture-myths, as in the cases of Hermes, Prometheus, Œdipus, and Kadmos. The American parallels to these are to be found in the stories of Michabo, Viracocha, Ioskeha, and Quetzalcoatl. "As elsewhere the world over, so in America, many tribes had to tell of . . . an august character, who taught them what they knew, the tillage of the soil, the properties of plants, the art of picture-writing, the secrets of magic; who founded their institutions and established their religions; who governed them long with glory abroad and peace at home; and finally did not die, but, like Frederic Barbarossa, Charlemagne, King Arthur, and all great heroes, vanished mysteriously, and still lives somewhere, ready at the right moment to return to his beloved people, and lead them to victory and happiness." (p. 160.) Every one is familiar with the numerous legends of white-skinned, full-bearded heroes, like the mild Quetzalcoatl, who in times long previous to Columbus came from the far East to impart the rudiments

of civilization and religion to the red men. By those who first heard these stories, they were supposed, with naïve Euhemerism, to refer to ante-Columbian visits of Europeans to this continent, like that of the Northmen in the tenth century. But a scientific study of the subject has dissipated such notions. These legends are far too numerous, they are too similar to each other, they are too manifestly symbolical, to admit of any such interpretation. By comparing them minutely with each other, and with kindred myths of the Old World, their true character soon becomes apparent.

One of the most widely famous of these culture-heroes was Manabozho, or Michabo, the Great Hare. With entire unanimity, says Dr. Brinton, the various branches of the Algonquin race, "the Powhatans of Virginia, the Lenni Lenape of the Delaware, the warlike hordes of New England, the Ottawas of the far North, and the Western tribes, perhaps without exception, spoke of 'this chimerical beast,' as one of the old missionaries calls it, as their common ancestor. The *totem*, or clan, which bore his name was looked up to with peculiar respect." Not only was Michabo the father and guardian of these numerous tribes, he was the founder of their religious rites, the inventor of picture-writing, the ruler of the weather, the creator and preserver of earth and heaven." "From a grain of sand brought from the bottom of the primeval ocean he fashioned the habitable land, and set it floating on the waters, till it grew to such a size, that a strong young wolf, running constantly, died of old age ere he reached its limits." He was also, like Nimrod, a mighty hunter. "One of his footsteps measured eight leagues, the Great Lakes were the beaver-dams he built, and when the cataracts impeded his progress he tore them away with his hands." (p. 163.) "Sometimes he was said to dwell in the skies with his brother, the snow, or, like many great spirits, to have built his wigwam in the far North on some floe of ice in the Arctic Ocean. . . . But in the oldest accounts of the missionaries he was alleged to reside toward the East; and in the holy formulæ of the *meda* craft, when the winds are invoked to the medicine lodge, the East is summoned in his name, the door opens in that direction, and there, at the edge of the earth, where the sun rises, on the shore of the infinite ocean that surrounds the land, he has his house, and sends the luminaries forth on their daily journeys." To such a story as this Euhemerism can hardly be applied without dissolving it entirely. It is quite evident that Michabo was no more a wise instructor and legislator than Minos or Kadmos. But, like these heroes, he is a personification of the solar life-giving power, which daily comes forth from its home in the East, making the earth to rejoice. The etymology of his name confirms the otherwise clear

indications of the legend itself. It is compounded of *michi*, great, and *wabos*, which means alike *hare* and *white*. "Dialectic forms in Algonquin for white are *wabi*, *wape*, *wompi*, etc.; for morning, *wapan*, *wapaneh*, *opah*; for east, *wapa*, *waubun*, etc.; for dawn, *wapa*, *waubun*; for day, *wompan*, *oppa*; for light, *oppung*; and many others similar." (p. 165, note.) So that Michabo is the Great White One, the God of the Dawn and the East. And the etymological confusion, by virtue of which he acquired his sobriquet of the Great Hare, affords a curious parallel to what has often happened in Aryan and Semitic mythology. The reader of the classics will at once be reminded of Lykaon, the bright hero, changed into a wolf by Zeus; of the transformation of Kalisto, mother of Arkas, into a bear; of the poisoned weapons of Phœbus and Herakles; of the epithet Lykegenes; and of the constellations of the Great and Little Bear.

Keeping in mind this solar character of Michabo, let us note how full of meaning are the myths concerning him. In the first cycle of these legends, says our author, "he is grandson of the Moon, his father is the West Wind, and his mother, a maiden, dies in giving him birth at the moment of conception. For the Moon is the goddess of night; the Dawn is her daughter, who brings forth the morning and perishes herself in the act; and the West, the spirit of darkness, as the East is of light, precedes and as it were begets the latter, as the evening does the morning. Straightway, however, continues the legend, the son sought the unnatural father to revenge the death of his mother, and then commenced a long and desperate struggle. It began on the mountains. The West was forced to give ground. Manabozho drove him across rivers and over mountains and lakes, and at last he came to the brink of this world. 'Hold,' cried he, 'my son, you know my power, and that it is impossible to kill me.' What is this but the diurnal combat of light and darkness, carried on from what time 'the jocund morn stands tiptoe on the misty mountain-tops,' across the wide world to the sunset, the struggle that knows no end, for both the opponents are immortal?" (p. 167.)

We should think that even the Veda could nowhere afford a more transparent narrative than this. Nor is the solar character of Michabo less apparent in the beautiful myth which relates that "in the autumn, in the 'moon of the falling leaf,' ere he composes himself to his winter's sleep, he fills his great pipe and takes a godlike smoke. The balmy clouds float over the hills and woodlands, filling the air with the haze of the 'Indian summer.'" A charming legend, worthy to commemorate at once the loveliest season of the American year and the red man's chief legacy to his successors.

The Iroquois tradition is very similar. In it appear twin brothers

born of a virgin mother, daughter of the moon, who died in giving them life. Their names, Ioskeha and Tawiscara, signify, in the Oneida dialect, the White One and the Dark One. Under the influence of Christian ideas, the contest between the brothers has been made to assume a moral character, like the strife between Ormuzd and Ahriman. But no such intention appears in the original myth; and Dr. Brinton has convincingly shown that none of the American tribes had any conception of a devil. When the quarrel came to blows, the dark brother was signally discomfited; and the victorious Ioskeha, returning to his grandmother, "established his lodge in the far East, on the borders of the Great Ocean, whence the sun comes. In time he became the father of mankind, and special guardian of the Iroquois." He caused the earth to bring forth, he stocked the woods with game, and taught his children the use of fire. "He it was who watched and watered their crops; and, indeed, without his aid, says the old missionary, quite out of patience with such puerilities, 'they think they could not boil a pot.'" (p. 171.) There was more in it than poor Brébeuf thought, as we are forcibly reminded by Tyndall, in the last chapter of his eloquent book on Heat. Even civilized men would find it difficult to boil a pot without the aid of solar power. Call him what we will, Ioskeha, Michabo, or Phœbus, the beneficent sun is the master and sustainer of us all; and if we were to relapse into heathenism, like Erckmann-Chatrian's innkeeper, we could not do better than to select him as our chief object of worship. "Is not, in fact, all life dependent on light? Do not all those marvellous and subtle forces known to the older chemists as the imponderable elements, without which not even the inorganic crystal is possible, proceed from the rays of light? Let us beware of that shallow science so ready to shout *Eureka*, and reverently acknowledge a mysterious intuition here displayed, which joins with the latest conquests of the human mind to repeat and emphasize that message which the Evangelist heard of the Spirit, and declared unto men, that 'God is Light.'" (p. 173.)

The same principles by which these simple cases are explained furnish also the key to the more complicated mythology of Mexico and Peru. Like the deities just discussed, Viracocha, the supreme god of the Quichuas, rises from the bosom of Lake Titicaca, and journeys westward, slaying with his lightnings the creatures who oppose him, until he finally disappears in the Western Ocean. Like Aphrodite, he bears in his name the evidence of his origin, *Viracocha* signifying "foam of the sea"; and hence "the White One," the dawn (*l'aube*), rising white on the horizon, like the foam on the surface of the waves. The Aymaras spoke of their original ancestors as white; and to this

day, our author informs us, the Peruvians call a white man *Viracocha*. The myth of Quetzalcoatl is of precisely the same character. All these solar heroes present in most of their qualities and achievements a striking likeness to those of the Old World. They combine the attributes of Apollo, Herakles, and Hermes. Like Herakles, they journey from east to west, smiting the powers of darkness, storm, and winter with the thunderbolts of Zeus or the unerring arrows of Apollo, and sinking often in a blaze of glory on the western verge of the world, where the waves meet the firmament. Or like Hermes, in a second cycle of legends, they rise with the soft breezes of a summer morning, driving before them the bright celestial cattle whose udders are heavy with refreshing rain, fanning the flames which devour the forests, blustering at the doors of wigwams, and escaping with weird laughter through keyholes and crevices. The white skins and flowing beards of these American heroes may be aptly compared to the fair faces and long golden locks of their Hellenic compeers. Yellow hair was in all probability as rare in Greece as a full beard in Peru or Mexico; but in each case the description suits the solar character of the hero. One important class of incidents, however, is apparently quite absent from the American legends. We frequently see the Dawn described as a virgin mother who dies in giving birth to the Day; but nowhere in Dr. Brinton's book do we remember seeing her pictured as a lovely or valiant maiden, ardently wooed, but speedily forsaken by her solar lover. Perhaps in no respect is the superior richness and beauty of the Aryan myths more manifest than in this. Brunhild, Urvasi, Medea, Ariadne, CEnone, and countless other kindred heroines, with their brilliant legends, could not be spared from the mythology of our ancestors without leaving it meagre indeed. These were the materials which Kalidasa, the Attic dramatists, and the bards of the Nibelungen found ready, awaiting their artistic treatment. But the mythology of the New World, with all its pretty and agreeable *naïveté*, affords hardly enough, either of variety in situation or of complexity in motive, for a grand epic or a genuine tragedy.

We have confined our observations to the subject of solar myths, on account both of the great interest attaching to it, and of the valuable support given by Dr. Brinton's book to the general theory of mythology now in the ascendant among European scholars. It must not be supposed, however, that Dr. Brinton contents himself with bringing in "the Dawn" as the infallible clew to every intricate legend, or that he labors under the unconscious delusion, which seems to afflict some enthusiastic mythologists, that uncivilized man has nothing to think of save the alternations of day and night. The discussion of the dawn-

myths occupies but one of the eleven very interesting chapters in Dr. Brinton's book. He treats with considerable fulness the obscure myths of the deluge, as well as those of the creation, the epochs of Nature, and the final catastrophe of the universe. A chapter is devoted to the symbols of the bird and the serpent, another to myths of fire, water, and thunder, and much curious learning is brought to bear on the elucidation of sacred numbers and the symbol of the cross. Our author's opinion that the sacredness attached to the number *four* in nearly all systems of mythology is due to a primitive worship of the cardinal points becomes very probable, when we recollect that the similar pre-eminence of *seven* is almost demonstrably connected with the adoration of the sun, moon, and five planets, which has left its record in the structure and nomenclature of the Aryan and Semitic week. (Cf. Humboldt's *Kosmos*, III. 469 – 476.) A fetichistic regard for the cardinal points has not always been absent from the minds of persons instructed in a higher theology: as witness a well-known passage in Irenæus, and the theories of Bancroft and Whitgift, in accordance with which English churches were at one time built in a line east and west.

But further remarks upon Dr. Brinton's interesting book would take us beyond our proper limits. As regards the scholarship displayed in this treatise, we have no such minute knowledge of the subject as would enable us to criticise it in detail. But the philosophical spirit in which it is written is deserving of unstinted praise, and justifies the belief, that, in whatever Dr. Brinton may in future contribute to the literature of Comparative Mythology, he will continue to reflect credit upon himself and his country.

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2. — *Histoire du Droit dans les Pyrénées (Comté de Bigorre)*. Par M. G. B. DE LAGRÈZE, Conseiller à la Cour Impériale de Pau. Paris: Imprimé par Ordre de l'Empereur à l'Imprimerie Impériale. 1867.

WHATEVER may be the political sins of Louis Napoleon, he at all events deserves the thanks of students for his enlightened encouragement of all learning that is not dangerous to Cæsarism. It is true that the classical attainments of Professor Rogeard, as displayed in the *Propos de Labiénus*, met with no very flattering reception at the hands of the imperial police, but these little eccentricities must be pardoned in the founders of dynasties; and when research into the past is not animated simply by the desire to excite discontent with the present, it finds in the Second Empire an intelligent patron, whose example more liberal communities would do well to imitate. Under the stim-